

Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The New Hampton Community School District received a 2001 Harkin grant totaling \$275,000 which it used to help build a community fitness center in collaboration with the city of New Hampton. The district also received a 2002 grant for \$260,000 to install a new HVAC system at the high school and four fire safety grants totaling \$218,817 to make improvements to schools throughout the district. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the New Hampton Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—Deb Larsen, Bob Smith, Terry Anderson, Tom Rasmussen and Kevin Rieck and former board members Rich Stochl, Rick Holthaus, Tom Gansen, George Feazell, Virgil Pickar, Gerald Johnson, Dr. Todd Becker, Rich Goodwin, David Utterback and Clarence Kriener. I would also like to recognize superintendent Stephen Nicholson, former superintendents Bob Longmuir and Terry Christie, business manager and supervisor of buildings and grounds Bob Ayers, curriculum coordinator Linda Kennedy, high school principal Richard Evans, activities director Kelly O'Donnell, New Hampton Mayor Darwin Sittig and the New Hampton City Council, Chairman Steve Dahl and members of the board of trustees for the New Hampton Municipal Light Plant, Chip Schwickerath and Willis Hansen from the GIFT Campaign, and Lynn Schwickerath from the New Hampton Booster Club.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the New Hampton Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

OELWEIN COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Oelwein Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Oelwein Community School District received three Harkin grants totaling \$1,129,212. The 1998 grant for \$250,000 helped build the Oelwein Early Childhood Learning Center to provide classrooms for prekindergarten, preschool, child care, Head Start and before and after school programs. The 1999 grant for \$750,000 helped build the Williams Performing Arts Center and Oelwein Wellness Center. The 2005 grant for \$129,212 helped build the Regional Academy for Math Science and Technology. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

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The city of Oelwein has been an important partner with the school district so I would like to recognize mayor Larry Murphy, former mayor Gene Vine, city manager Steven Kendall, and members of the city council—Mike Kerns, Paul Ryan, Duane Brandt, John Gosse, Nathan Lein, Rex Ericson and former members Viola Sims, Curt Solsma, Jacqueline Greco, Charles Geilenfeld, James Mazziotti, Terry Pepin and Duane Ohrt as well as community members Kevin Brooks, Lyle Miller and Tom Masey.

The projects also received strong support from the Greater Oelwein Area Charitable Foundation, Inc and I would like to recognize board members Donald Avenson, Stephen Bisenius, Steven Falck, Donald Frazer, Gene Fuelling and Ronald Van Veldhuizen.

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SPIRIT LAKE COMMUNITY EDUCATION

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